

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals Upon Current Topics—Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

POPULAR UPEHAVINGS IN EUROPE.

Since 1848-49 we have had no situation in Europe at all resembling that which now exists. Then, perhaps, the popular uprisings were more violent and more nearly simultaneous. If at this time there has been less of that we should call unity of effort, and less of immediate and irresistible force, it must be admitted that now the popular discontent is quite as general, and that the expression of this discontent is more continuous and more successful. The 1848 outbreak was a failure. The popular uprisings of these last two or three years have all been more or less successful. The British people have demanded two great reforms. One has been obtained. The other is on the point of being achieved. The Reform bill carried under Mr. Disraeli and the extinction of the Irish Church Establishment under Mr. Gladstone have given ample proof to the world that in England the people are now masters of the situation. The resurrection and reconstruction of Italy, the restoration and reconstruction of Germany, the revolutions which have been accomplished in Austria and Spain, the reforms now being inaugurated in France, not to speak of the changes in favor of the people which have taken place in Russia and Turkey, show that the European Continent, from some cause or causes, has entered upon a new era less in the interest of absolutism and more in favor of popular rights.

It would not be uninteresting to enter into a full explanation of these changes, to show how tyrannies and privileges are everywhere yielding to justice and in favor of popular rights, but a full explanation is not compatible with our present purpose. This is the least to be regretted that a satisfactory explanation is visible and lies on the surface of things. The secret of the success of all recent popular demands is to be found in the telegraph, the railroad, the printing press, and particularly in the newspaper. Formerly it was difficult to get up on any question a common and vigorous public sentiment. In the olden times nations might struggle for months and even years and the world would be ignorant of the fact. This was not more true of nations in regard to each other than it was of one section of a country towards every other section. A common sentiment could not be created except by years of effort, and hence a powerful public sentiment was next to impossible. Now all is changed. Nothing is more easy now than to thrill the world with a thought. Steam, electricity, the printing press have destroyed all the ancient barriers, have spanned the deep valleys, pierced the everlasting hills, bridged the mighty wastes of waters—have, in fact, in the language of ancient prophecy, "made the crooked places straight and the rough places plain"—and thus made the world a unit and brought every man close to the ear of every other. If a great thought now finds expression, the world hears it. If a great action is contemplated, sections and nations can move as one man.

The success of recent popular outbreaks finds a secondary explanation in the extraordinary success of popular government in the United States. It is something to be taught what to do. It is something to have the mechanical appliances put into one's hand to give the lessons received a practical shape. It is another and a more important thing to have set before one a living, powerful, compelling example. Such example the United States now exhibits to the world. Time was when the republic was despised. Later, and before the civil war broke out, it was regarded as an experiment. During the war it was pronounced a failure. Since the war it has universally been pronounced an unquestioned, a complete success. As a people we have passed through an ordeal of fire such as no people have passed through in the world's history. The nations of Europe have seen us emerge from the flames with hair comparatively unmingled and with scarcely the smell of fire upon our garments. Our deliverance has been almost as miraculous as that of the Hebrew youths upon whose bodies the fire had no power. This does not fully state the case. Not only have we sustained little or no injury. We have grown in might and majesty. We have increased in wealth and influence. The late war revealed to ourselves our greatness; and that greatness is now confessed before and admitted by the world. Hence the magnetic power which these shores have over the millions of Europe, and hence, too, the confidence which the people have found in themselves. If popular government be such a blessing, why should not that blessing be shared by all? Expressed or unexpressed, this is the revolutionary sentiment of the hour; and the sentiment is as much a terror to tyrants as it is an anchor of hope to the oppressed.

With the growing power of steam, electricity, and the printing press, and with the increasing influential example of the United States, we may expect to witness more wonderful changes in Europe. We scarcely know what we are. We can form no adequate conception of what we are to become. With truth we can say all our victories are victories in the interests of Christian civilization and human progress. All our movements are onward and upward. As we move on the people everywhere feel the impulse and take courage. As we triumph, liberty all the world over rails victory to her standard. Our success already makes it certain that the time is not far distant when the monarchs, the oligarchs, the monopolists, the tyrants of the Old World, by whatever name named, shall be no more. We approach that grand period which shall witness the parliament of man, the federation of the world.

THE "WORLD" AND SICKLES.

The World was perfectly aware, when it undertook to display the character and career of Sickles, that there would be an unpleasant effluvia from the mass of mouldering muck which it felt compelled to stir up with the pitchfork of exposure. It was also aware that had not Mr. Horace Greeley told it—that the rural radical journals were mostly under the control of "narrow-minded blockheads." But it did not dream that any of those persons could be narrow-minded enough, or block-headed enough, to blockguard it, as if it were responsible for the moral cesspool which it had only uncovered. "When Hercules turned the purifying river into King Augustus' stable," Thomas Carlyle observes, "I have no doubt the confusion that resulted was considerable all around; but I think it was not Hercules' blame; I think it was some other's." Something like that the World may say of itself. It was the very disgusting, but very necessary, piece of work it has lately felt compelled to perform. Why, pitiously inquiring the buccinic prints in question, why bring to light what has

passed into oblivion, to inflict pain and disgrace upon a man whose recent record, at least, has not been discreditable to him? Why mention that a gallant soldier of the Union, under the impulses of hot youth, pursued the profession of pandarism and lived in open concubinage with a public trull? If Sickles was a mail-robber, he has since been made a major-general. If he once casually murdered a man, did he not get a log shot off at Gettysburg? And if he forgot notes in the piping times of peace, did he not fight bravely in time of war?

We answer that the World showed that all the acts of Sickles' life were of a piece. We showed how the impudent chicanery by which he got temporary credit for having organized a brigade was the same impudent chicanery by which he got a disreputable woman presented at the Court of St. James, and another more disreputable woman admitted to pollute the floor of the Legislature of this State, while that body was yet capable to be polluted. We showed that the mutinous and unscrupulous temper which led him to betray his benefactor when he was a black-guard boy was the same quality which led him, in the ripeness of his manhood and his major-generalship, to intrigue against the superior whose orders he had disobeyed, whose victory he had imperilled, and who had treated him with only too much forbearance. We showed that the same conscienceless callosity which led him to take the life of a man who had dishonored him (dishonored him?), and so bruit his years after to all the world, led him, years afterwards, by taking back a faithless wife, to brand that disgrace indelibly upon himself. He is the same man now that he was then, for anything that appears. If he had changed, the remorse and disgust which would follow his first and faintest perception of himself in his true character would drive him to a wilderness for life-long penitence and penance, if so be his memory might be blotted from the minds of his fellow-men.

What sort of men can those be who are so eager to condone such crimes as these of Sickles without even a profession of penitence from him? Do they think that a military command, got by bribery and lost by treachery, ought to make us forget a life of infamy? Can a man atone by laying his leg upon the altar of his country (had that Sickles would have laid it there if he had had the disposal of it) for laying his manhood at the altar of a wanton? It is better, the Bible metaphorically tells us, to enter into life half or maimed, than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. But our censurers give us to understand literally that this man walks heavenward on crutches, although his legs always carried him in the diametrically opposite direction. What these people mean, if they mean anything, is that political perfidy is an ample atonement for personal infamy, and that if a man is only a radical he may be whatever other soundly thing he pleases.

Some exceptionally stupid papers call our account of Sickles "malignant." That account was a mere and unaltered statement of the facts of his life. In another article we drew what may be called the immoral of that life. There is a malignity, and there is an indignation. It was the latter that we felt and expressed. Private citizen Sickles is a disgrace to himself. Major-General Sickles is a disgrace to the United States army. But Minister Sickles is a disgrace to all the people of the country which sends him, and an insult to all the people of the country to which he is sent. In this capacity, all citizens of his country are involved in his infamy, and we mean to give notice, and we mean to give notice, that there are some citizens who do not intend tamely to partake that infamy. We mean to prevent the elevation of other Sickleses to any post where they in any way officially represent the hundreds of thousands of readers whose sentiments, in this matter, we know we speak. And we hereby give notice that we shall serve every such scoundrel as we have served Sickles, with a view to the suppression of Sickleses and the purging of politics. But the radical journals are not all so stupid or so perverse as those whose comments we have been considering. The Nation has taken advantage of the opportunity for a display of political independence which this Sickles business gave it in the article which we reproduced. The article is so just and so temperate that we are in hopes that it will carry conviction in quarters where any arguments or asseverations that might appear in this journal would be logically and courteously received as effusions of Copperhead spite.

MORE ABOUT OFFICE-SEEKING.

We are so anxious to induce correct habits of thinking and acting on the important subject of office-seeking, that we have written these lines to controvert our view of it. One of them, after much that is inconsequent, says:—"While indiscriminate denunciation of office-seekers has little effect upon the jobbers and the pot-house politicians, it does beat back and discourage those deserving men who respect themselves and are respected by others. It, therefore, indirectly aids the vile and unprincipled. But, pray tell us, dear Tribune, how many men have been eminent in public affairs who had not been office-seekers? Have we had as many as three Presidents of the United States who did not seek the office? Did not Henry Clay seek it again and again? and did not the editor of the Tribune mourn over his defeat as over the death of a friend? There are men who have sought, won, and done honor to high positions. Would the Tribune have the President ignore such men, and appoint unknown men to important places, unknown men who would not be known if they had rendered any signal service to our cause? If to be active and aspiring in political affairs is to be rewarded with neglect, and even with denunciation, then men of character and capacity will turn away with disgust, and not even fifty of the leading men in a district can coax them back. The field will be left clear for the jobbers."

ENGLAND'S EXPLODED PEERS.

It is quite obvious that a knowledge of the history of England is not one of the accomplishments required of British journalists in these days. Else we should hardly be favored with so much profound moralizing upon the wicked and shiftless ways of England's aristocracy in this nineteenth century. That young men, with no better moral training than young men born to great fortunes are apt in all countries to get, should be at the mercy of their own passions and other men's interests, is a sad thing certainly, but neither new nor strange. The extravagance and folly which have brought the young Dukes of Hamilton and Newcastle, the Marquis of Hastings, and the Earls of Westmoreland and Jersey, together with sundry juvenile nobles of less importance, to public grief and the auctioneer's hammer, are, after all, but an old story often told, and in other lands than Britain. Four centuries ago, an English duke of more exalted origin than either Hamilton or Clinton was formally degraded from his rank, by the British peers in Parliament assembled, because he was "too poor to maintain his dignity." He that had been Duke of Norfolk drew a pauper and an exile in Flanders. Two centuries later, the splendid namesake of the unlucky Villiers, Earl of Jersey, whose fate now points at many paragraphs, expired, as the poet tells us,

"In the worst man's worst hour." He, too, was a duke, and the dual favorite of a spendthrift king. Philip, Duke of Wharfedale, at once the most graceful and the most graceless noble of his time, brings the ancient moral down still nearer to our own days. And the catastrophes which overtook the Earl of Huntingtower and of Mornington, the latter the next kinsman of England's "Iron Duke,"

"Who never lost an English gun," have not yet passed from the memory of men of the world still living and still equal to their daily dinner and their daily game of whist. "Men have died and worms have eaten them" for now a goodly number of ages. Peers have wasted their substance and usurers have devoured them. So, too, have more republican citizens. It is childish, and more than childish, to make grave questions of political organization hinge upon questions of a strictly social origin.

THE VIRGINIA VICTORY—EFFORTS TO MAKE MISCHIEF.

Two classes of mischief-makers are busying themselves with the Virginia election, with the view of adapting it to their respective purposes. Democrats are claiming it as a Democratic victory, and insisting that it is the result of Democratic strength and effort. Partisans of Wells and the defeated ticket are denouncing it as the product of fraud, and are invoking Congressional assistance to arrest and reverse the action of the people and the law. Both of these representations are dishonest. Both are false, as matters of fact, and are conceived in the interest of those who, on the one hand, would frustrate reconstruction, and, on the other, would make it the means of personal aggrandizement. National politics really had little to do with the contest. Old party names were banished, and every attempt to introduce the mere political element was promptly repelled by the supporters of Walker. Whatever interest was manifested by Democrats out of the State was clearly against the movement championed by the Walker party. The World of this city labored again and again to persuade the Virginians to have nothing to do with reconstruction. And though now it chooses to "congratulate Virginia on her superb success," we have but to turn to its files to trace a subtle but not the less malignant hostility to all plans for bringing the State into harmony with the law. There were also Democratic politicians in the State who resisted the ratification of the Constitution, and urged the people to dare the General Government to do its worst. The pretense that the Democracy gained this victory is, then, as hollow as it is impudent. So far as they revealed old party affinities, they were against both Walker and Wells; these were against every step that seemed to lead in the direction of reconstruction. The "superb victory" of which the World speaks was achieved not only in spite of the suggestions of that journal, but in defiance of the declared will and purpose of the party it represents.

The absurdity of the Democratic pretense becomes still more apparent when the nature and consequences of the victory are considered. Had the Walker platform been equivocal, or had the triumph of the Walker ticket been attended with the rejection of the Constitution, we could have understood the attempt to pervert the significance of the popular vote. But the election has settled every thing precisely as the Democrats desired not to have things settled. It has decreed the continuance of universal suffrage. It has invested the negro with political equality. It has imparted life to the Constitution prepared by the convention held under the Reconstruction acts. It has created a Legislature whose members are eligible under the law, and of whose readiness to ratify the fifteenth amendment there seems no doubt. It has chosen qualified men for Congress, and has vested the chief offices of the State in hands pledged to the support of the Republican policy, and prepared to labor in cordial harmony with President Grant. Finally, it has dispelled the false fears that in political affairs race would be ranged against race, and has demonstrated the mutual willingness of white and black to co-operate for a common purpose, and that purpose one which commends itself to the feeling and judgment of the country.

If there is anything in this result over which Democrats can reasonably chuckle, we are curious to know where and what it is. The very measures which they denounce most vehemently in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana, have been sustained in Virginia. The policy they approve, Walker and his supporters have repudiated. The new Constitution which they have described as "covenant with death," has been ratified by a majority of forty or fifty thousand; and the ratification of the pending amendment, which they describe as "a league with hell," has been assured by the same majority. A more complete Republican triumph could not be desired. For though national politics, as such, played only a slight part in the contest, the Republican character of the victory is proved by the results it achieves. An election which gives effect to the policy of Congress, realizes the objects contemplated by the President, and places at the head of the State a tried and consistent Unionist, who is in cordial union with the principles and aims of the national administration, cannot be characterized otherwise than as a Republican success. The battle was fought on Republican ground, and the mortification of defeat belongs to the national Democracy as well as to the proscriptionists composing the Wells party.

The endeavors of the latter to weaken the moral force of the victory by describing it as the product of political profligacy, aided by fraud at the polls, are not deserving of respectful attention. They are so manifestly occasioned by disappointment and defeat that they will obtain little heed from the country. A despatch we published recently reports General Canby to have declared himself "much pleased at the good order in the election," which, from the reports of his officers, he believed to have been "as fair as could be held in any State of the Union." We do not doubt that he is right. From not a single locality have we seen evidence of violence or concealed with creditable order, and its termination reflects the deliberate preferences and purposes of the people. As to the pretensions to superior political orthodoxy which are put forward in behalf of Wells and the defeated ticket, we are persuaded that they will not endure examination. The personnel of the winning ticket, considered with reference to character and capacity, is in every respect entitled to consideration. And in regard to principle this fact should be decisive: the Walker and the Wells platforms are identical in their Republicanism. Whatever difference of principle exists between them relates to the proscriptive provisions of the new Constitution, which have been expunged. And, as General Grant favored the expurgation of these clauses, which were voted down by the Walker party,

while the Wells party, as a whole, sustained them, it is tolerably plain that, on the only point of difference between the parties where principle is involved, Walker is in more complete harmony with the administration than his opponent. This review of the case is rendered appropriate, if not necessary, by the evident desire of mischief-makers to invest the victory with a false coloring, as a preliminary to an appeal for Congressional interference. The guilt and shame of this desire belong equally to Democrats of other States and the supporters of Wells in and out of Virginia. The former class are more solicitous for the defeat of reconstruction than for its success; the latter care nothing for reconstruction, except as a means of promoting their personal interests. They are equally untrustworthy, and their purpose is a common one.

It is in view of this opposition, open or treacherous, that a correct understanding of the scope and significance of the election, and of the antecedents, character, and principles of the successful candidates, becomes important. The facts of the case are all favorable to the work accomplished by the majority. They prove conclusively a literal compliance with the requirements of Congress, and a bona fide acceptance of its policy; and more than this is not necessary to entitle the State to the privileges incident to reconstruction.

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